

The development of the new urban area, Thủ Thiêm, is currently in progress. Thủ Thiêm is a 657-hectare area located in District 2 across the Saigon River from District 1. Ho Chi Minh City's chief architect approved the master plan in 1998. It is slated for 130,000 people and is expected to be developed over a period of 20 years.¹ "Thu Thiem is ambitiously designed to create an economic strength robust enough to change the economic structure of Ho Chi Minh City and make the city integrate deeper into the international labour market in times of globalization."² The Thủ Thiêm project has benefited from the experience from developing Phú Mỹ Hưng, a new urban area in District 7, in terms of urban planning and architecture.

The Boston-based architecture firm, Sasaki Associates, won an international design competition in 2003 to work for the Investment and Construction Authority of Thủ Thiêm.³ Their number one priority is to attract new residents and to build homes and business buildings for them. There will most likely be two types of people that will come to settle in Thủ Thiêm. The first group includes national and international entrepreneurs and businessmen. The second group consists of rich people searching for luxury housing. Both groups seek luxury accommodations and excellent social services.⁴

The Thủ Thiêm Bridge opened in 2008. The six-lane bridge connects Thủ Thiêm to the Bình Thạnh District. The project cost USD\$60 million. A second bridge connecting Thủ Thiêm to District 1 is currently in the process of being designed and built. It is expected to have four traffic lanes and to cost over VND 2.3 trillion (USD\$110.3 million). It is set to open in 2020.⁵

The Thủ Thiêm Tunnel opened on November 20, 2011 after six years of construction. It crosses the Saigon River linking District 2 to District 1. The six-lane tunnel will aid in the city's trade and transport routes. It is also an integral part to the East-West Highway project, which runs through eight districts. According the Ho Chi Minh City Chairman Lê Hoàng Quân, "The route completion would contribute to the development of the Thủ Thiêm New Urban Area into a huge center of finance, commerce and service in the region."⁶

Although evictions officially began in 2002, but there are still families residing in the area. Some live in the rubble of their former homes because they have not found a new home. Others return to the area after unsuccessfully relocating. Many are unable to sustain their livelihoods in the relocated area.⁷

Some researchers who are part of a team to give input on the Thủ Thiêm project emphasized a need to include the local residents into the housing through cheap housing and even re-selling the houses back to the locals. The research team also suggested that the city's

¹ Douglass, Mike and Liling Huang (November 2007), *Globalizing The City In Southeast Asia: Utopia On The Urban Edge – The Case of Phu My Hung, Saigon*, 2.

² Nguyen Quang Vinh (2008), "Addressing the Spacial and Social Segregations in New Towns of Metropolises," in *Trends of Urbanization and Suburbanization in Southeast Asia*, 318.

³ "Thu Thiem New Urban Area," *Sasaki Associates*, <http://www.sasaki.com/project/139/> (accessed 22 Aug. 2013).

⁴ Nguyen Quang Vinh (2008), "Addressing the Spacial and Social Segregations in New Towns of Metropolises," in *Trends of Urbanization and Suburbanization in Southeast Asia*, 319.

⁵ Luan, Kinh, "Design of Thu Thiem 2 Bridge Fixed," *The Saigon Times*, 4 Dec. 2013, <http://english.thesaigontimes.vn/Home/business/infrastructure/26871/> (accessed 22 Aug. 2013).

⁶ Quan, Anh, "Tunnel opens to traffic," *The Saigon Times*, 21 Nov. 2011, <http://english.thesaigontimes.vn/Home/business/infrastructure/20449/> (accessed 22 Aug. 2013).

⁷ "The different looks of the Saigon riverbanks," *VietNamNet*, 21 April 2013, <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/vietnam-in-photos/71646/the-different-looks-of-the-saigon-riverbanks.html> (accessed 12 Aug. 2013).

government choose about 600 former residents and provide them with an education and professional training so that they can have a chance of being hired to work in Thủ Thiêm. However, only .5% of the original residents would be able to participate. If this project were to occur, it would create a culturally and socially balanced new town as compared to other new urban areas in Asia.⁸

The construction at Thủ Thiêm is currently at a stand still. The development project has stalled due to a faltering economy, lack of infrastructure and high leasing fees. Investors are not attracted to the project because of these challenges and mainly because of the slow progress of the infrastructure completion.⁹ However, the city is trying to speed up infrastructure construction to encourage more investors to join the project. Site clearance tasks are also 98% complete.¹⁰

⁸ Nguyen Quang Vinh (2008), "Addressing the Spatial and Social Segregations in New Towns of Metropolises," in *Trends of Urbanization and Suburbanization in Southeast Asia*, 320.

⁹ Letwin, Brian, "As Thu Thiem Stalls, City Rushes to Lure Investors," *Saigoneer*, 10 May 2013, <http://saigoneer.com/component/content/article/154-society/development/597-as-thu-thiem-stalls-city-tries-to-lure-investors> (accessed 12 Aug. 2013).

¹⁰ "Thu Thiem new urban area unattractive to investors," *Tuoi Tre News*, 9 May 2013, <http://tuoitrenews.vn/business/9438/thu-thiem-new-urban-area-unattractive-to-investors> (accessed 12 Aug. 2013).